

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----124825 051601Z /41
O 051539Z APR 78 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7596
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
WHITEHOUSE WASH DC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 10072

EXDIS (DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, IS, EG, XF
SUBJECT: BEGIN'S IMPRESSIONS OF SADAT

REF: TEL AVIV 4511

SUMMARY: REFTEL UNDERSCORES FACT THAT BEGIN STILL DOES NOT UNDERSTAND SADAT AND WAY LATTER THINKS AND OPERATES. WE MIGHT FACILITATE ME PEACE PROCESS BY ANOTHER EFFORT TO EXPLAIN SADAT'S OPERATING STYLE TO BEGIN AND VICE VERSA. END SUMMARY.

1. REFTEL SUGGESTS TO ME THAT BEGIN STILL DOES NOT UNDERSTAND SADAT AND WAY LATTER THINKS AND OPERATES. THIS DOES NOT AUGUR WELL FOR THE PEACE PROCESS AND ARGUES FOR KEEPING THE TWO MEN APART UNTIL OTHERS (WEIZMAN, PERHAPS DAYAN OR WE) HAVE BEEN ABLE TO WORK OUT ELEMENTS OF AGREEMENT.

2. THAT BEGIN COULD HAVE BELIEVED THAT HE AND SADAT HAD REACHED A GENUINE MEETING OF THE MINDS DURING THEIR ISMAILIA TALKS IS INDICATIVE OF HIS FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND SADAT. WHILE THE TWO DID AGREE TO ESTABLISH POLITICAL AND SECRET

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MILITARY COMMITTEES, THAT WAS ABOUT ALL. THE FINAL PRESS CONFERENCE, AT WHICH SADAT READ THE DIVERGENT ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN POSITIONS ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, MADE CLEAR TO ALL LISTENERS HOW LITTLE AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED. SADAT MUST ALSO BE FAULTED FOR THE SUBSEQUENT MISUNDERSTANDING, SINCE HE ALLOWED BEGIN TO MAKE HIS POINTS WITHOUT THEN AND THERE REFUTING OR REJECTING THOSE THAT

HE KNEW WERE UNACCEPTABLE TO HIM. THIS MAY WELL HAVE GIVEN RISE TO BEGIN'S BELIEF THAT SOME KIND OF A MEETING OF THE MINDS HAD BEEN REACHED.

3. BEGIN'S DESCRIPTION THAT SADAT SEEMS CONSTANTLY TO MAKE HIMSELF A LITTLE DEAF HAS SOME TRUTH, BUT SELECTIVE HEARING IS HARDLY AN EGYPTIAN MONOPOLY IN THE ARAB/ISRAELI EQUATION. IN ANY CASE, IT MISSES THE POINT. SADAT LISTENS CAREFULLY TO BEGIN'S SPEECHES (AND, AS HE TOLD WEIZMAN, SOMETIMES FINDS THEM INSULTING), JUST AS BEGIN PRESUMABLY HEARS SADAT'S STATEMENTS, BUT IN CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS IT SHOULD HARDLY BE EXPECTED THAT SADAT ANY MORE SO THAN BEGIN IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT POSITIONS SET FORTH IN THE OTHER'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS AS THE FINAL WORD. " EGYPTIANS CONTEND BEGIN'S FREQUENT PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS BELIE HIS CLAIM THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO PRECONDITIONS, BUT SADAT PREFERS WORK ON LATTER BASIS AND CONSIDERS EVERYTHING OPEN FOR DISCUSSION.

4. SADAT IS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO PIN DOWN, BUT HE IS NOT AS QUIXOTIC AS BEGIN SEEMS TO BELIEVE. THE RECORD WILL, I BELIEVE, SHOW THAT SADAT HAS BEEN REMARKABLY CONSISTENT IN THE POLICIES HE HAS ESPOUSED. BUT SADAT IS ESSENTIALLY A CONCEPTUALIST AND ONE OF HIS MAJOR SHORTCOMINGS IS IMPATIENCE WITH DETAIL. IN CONTEXT OF HIS CONCEPTUALIST APPROACH, SOME OF HIS IDEAS HAVE AND CONTINUE TO EVOLVE.

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SOMETIMES THEY ADVANCE AND SOMETIMES THEY REGRESS. AN EXAMPLE OF THE LATTER IS THAT SADAT, ACCORDING TO MUBARAK, SPOKE TO WEIZMAN ABOUT A "DEMILITARIZED STATE" ON THE WEST BANK AS AN OPTION IN ADDITION TO LINK WITH JORDAN. SADAT CONSIDERS THIS PERFECTLY PERMISSIBLE, SINCE, IN HIS VIEW, ISRAELIS HAVE NOT YET SERIOUSLY BEGUN TO NEGOTIATE. HE IS ALSO CONSCIOUS OF ISRAELI PROPENSITY TAKE ANY CONCESSION, POCKET IT AND GO ON TO ASK FOR MORE.

5. SADAT'S CLOSEST ADVISERS WOULD CHORTLE AT BEGIN'S NOTION THAT SADAT HAD CAREFULLY STUDIED BRIEFING PAPERS BEFORE THE WEIZMAN VISIT. ONE MIGHT WISH THIS WERE SO, BUT IT IS NOT SADAT'S STYLE. WHATEVER WIDE READING SADAT MAY ONCE HAVE DONE, HE READS VERY LITTLE THESE DAYS. MOREOVER, TO BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, NO EGYPTIAN MINISTRY WAS TASKED WITH PREPARING BRIEFING BOOKS FOR THAT VISIT.

6. I CANNOT HELP BUT BELIEVE THAT THE PEACE PROCESS WOULD BE FACILITATED IF BOTH PRINCIPALS HAD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE OTHER OPERATES. THE PRE-ISMAILIA

CHARACTERIZATIONS THAT WE PROVIDED WERE INADEQUATE FOR THIS PURPOSE AND, AS SUBSEQUENT EVENTS SHOWED, WIDE OF THE MARK. WEIZMAN SHOULD BY NOW HAVE SOME CLUE ON SADAT'S STYLE, BUT DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXPLAIN IT TO BEGIN. IT MIGHT BE USEFUL IF AT SOME APPROPRIATE TIME, WE MADE ANOTHER EFFORT TO EXPLAIN SADAT'S OPERATING STYLE TO BEGIN AND VICE VERSA.

7. ON ANOTHER POINT, WEIZMAN IS CORRECT THAT WHAT SADAT SAYS HE NEEDS IS A DECLARATION OF INTENT TO WITHDRAW RATHER THAN WITHDRAWAL ITSELF (LAST SENTENCE, PARA 7, TEL AVIV 4501). THE WAY SADAT HAS NORMALLY PUT IT TO ME

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EXDIS (DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS)

IS A DECLARATION OF QUOTE WILLINGNESS IN PRINCIPLE TO WITHDRAW UNQUOTE. MUBARAK'S STATEMENT TO ME REPORTED FIRST SENTENCE, PARA 4, CAIRO 9802, WAS NOT INTENDED TO CHANGE THIS. SADAT, ACCORDING TO MUBARAK, WAS TRYING TO STRESS THAT WITHOUT ISRAELI WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW FROM THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, NO SOLUTION COULD BE REACHED. EILTS

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